

Scandinavian Emigrant Ship Descriptions and Voyage Narratives

(1852-1868)

from *Ships, Saints, and Mariners* by Conway B. Sonne and other sources.

John J. Boyd

Ship: 1311 tons: 195' x 38' x 28'

Built: 1855 by S. G. Bogart at New York City, New York

Nearly two thousand Latter-day Saints were transported to America in three voyages by the full-bodied ship John J. Boyd of New York. Her first voyage began at Liverpool on 12 December 1855, just a few months after she was launched. On board were between 508 and 512 Mormon emigrants from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Italy, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Elder Knud Peterson presided over the Saints. The shipmaster was Captain Thomas Austin. He had previously skippered the 1418-ton ship *Jacob A. Westervelt* and the 1448-ton ship *Cultivator*. It was a well-ordered company. Rules of cleanliness and conduct were established. A trumpet called the emigrants to prayer morning and evening, and religious services were held frequently in the English, Danish, and Italian languages.

During the crossing the square-rigger encountered severe gales and hurricanes and midway in the Atlantic came upon the clipper ship *Louis Napoleon* in a sinking condition. The stricken craft was from Baltimore and bound for Liverpool with a cargo of flour. Her mast and spars were blown away and her leeward bulwarks smashed. Realizing the hopeless situation, her master and crew asked to be taken off their ship. They were welcomed aboard the *John J. Boyd*, whose own hands were suffering from sickness and exhaustion. The emigrants were also suffering. Measles had broken out, and the death rate was high among the children. In describing the weather and health conditions, Elder Charles R. Savage, a returning missionary, wrote:

Our captain got superstitious on account of the long passage, and ordered that there should be no singing on board; the mate said that all ships that had preachers on board were always sure of a bad passage; however, the Lord heard our prayers, and in His own due time we arrived at our destination. On the evening of the 15th of February we were safely at anchor-having been 66 days out from Liverpool.... On our taking the pilot, he informed us that there had been many disasters during the months of January and February; many ships had been wrecked. We made the passage without the loss of a single spar. On 16 February the emigrants landed at New York.

Under the command of Captain J. H. Thomas, her master since 1857, the John J. Boyd sailed from Liverpool on 23 April 1862 with 702 Latter-day Saints aboard. Apostles Charles C. Rich, Amasa M. Lyman, and George Q. Cannon organized the company and appointed Elders James S. Brown as president and John Lindsay and Joseph C. Rich as his counselors. There were also five

other returning missionaries besides the presidency. After a thirty-nine-day voyage, which though successful was somewhat longer than usual because of head winds, the Saints landed on 1 June at New York.

On 30 April 1863 the *John J. Boyd* with 767 Mormons aboard sailed from Liverpool again under the command of Captain J. H. Thomas. Elder William W. Cluff presided over the Saints, assisted by Elders Knud H. Bruun and William S. Baxter—three of nine returning missionaries. Most of the emigrants were from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. During the twenty-nine-day voyage sanitation and food were commendable. The emigrants sighted a number of icebergs and whales. The vessel arrived at New York on 29 May.

Named for an early marine merchant, the *John J. Boyd* was owned by William Tyson of New York. She was a three-decker with a square stern, round tuck, and billethead. Apparently in 1860 this packet ship was damaged by fire and salvaged. In July 1863, probably because of the Civil War, the vessel was sold to foreign owners.